

Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

This guidance applies to the meal patterns for grades K-12 in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP. The SSO follows the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. For information on the meal patterns, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. For additional guidance on the grains component for grades K-12, refer to the CSDE's guide, *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*, and visit the "Grains Component for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



"Breakfast cereals" are defined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations ([21 CFR 170.3\(n\)\(4\)](#)). They include ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals (such as puffed cereals, round or flaked cereals, and granola) and instant and regular hot cereals (such as oatmeal, cream of wheat, and farina). RTE breakfast cereals are a type of breakfast cereal that can be eaten as sold. They are typically fortified with vitamins and minerals.



Crediting Requirements

Breakfast cereals credit differently depending on the school nutrition program. The NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 require that all grains must be WGR. The ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 does not have a WGR requirement.

Note: Per USDA memo, [COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #90: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Specific School Meal Pattern Flexibility for School Year 2021-2022](#), school food authorities (SFAs) that cannot meet the WGR requirement during school year 2021-22 (through June 30, 2022) must request a waiver from the CSDE. For more information, visit the "[How To](#)" section of the CSDE's Operating Child Nutrition Programs during COVID-19 Outbreaks webpage. If the SFA has not applied to and received approval from the CSDE for this waiver, all grains served in school meals during school year 2021-22 must continue to be WGR.

Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP

Table 1 compares the meal pattern crediting requirements for breakfast cereals. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in School Nutrition Programs](#).

Table 1. Crediting requirements for breakfast cereals in the meal patterns for grades K-12		
Type of cereal	NSLP, SBP, and SSO	ASP
Cooked breakfast cereals	Must be whole grain-rich (WGR)	A creditable grain (whole, enriched, bran, or germ) ¹ must be the first ingredient or the cereal must be fortified
RTE breakfast cereals	Must be WGR	A creditable grain (whole, enriched, bran, or germ) ¹ must be the first ingredient or the cereal must be fortified
¹ Bran and germ do not credit in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12.		

Creditable Breakfast Cereals

The crediting requirements for each type of breakfast cereal are summarized below. Table 2 shows some examples of crediting RTE breakfast cereals in the school nutrition programs for grade K-12.

WGR breakfast cereals

WGR breakfast cereals credit in all school nutrition programs. The NSLP and SBP meal patterns required different WGR criteria for RTE and cooked breakfast cereals.

- **Cooked breakfast cereals** such as oatmeal (including regular and instant) are WGR if they meet the following criteria: 1) a whole grain is the first ingredient (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the next ingredient); 2) any other grain ingredients are enriched; and 3) the combined weight of any noncreditable grains (such as fiber, bran, germ, and modified food starch) does not exceed 6.99 grams per ounce equivalent (½ cup cooked or 28 grams dry). Cooked breakfast cereals that exceed the limit for noncreditable grains do not meet the WGR criteria.
- **RTE breakfast cereals** are WGR if they meet one of the following: 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified; or 2) the cereal is 100 percent whole grain. The limit for noncreditable grains does not apply to WGR RTE breakfast cereals. WGR RTE breakfast cereal that are 100 whole-grain do not need to be fortified.

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Whole grains consist of the entire cereal grain seed or kernel (starchy endosperm, fiber-rich bran, and nutrient-rich germ) after removing the inedible outer husk or hull. A 100 percent whole-grain cereal lists a whole grain as the first ingredient and contains only whole grains. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#).

Enriched breakfast cereals

Enriched breakfast cereals credit only in the ASP. Enriched grains contain five vitamins and minerals added in amounts required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to replace some of the nutrients lost during processing. The enrichment nutrients include thiamin (vitamin B₁, thiamin mononitrate, or thiamin hydrochloride); riboflavin (vitamin B₂); niacin (vitamin B₃ or niacinamide); folic acid (folate); and iron (reduced iron, ferrous sulfate, or ferric orthophosphate). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#).

Fortified breakfast cereals

Fortified breakfast cereals credit in the ASP, but must be WGR to credit in the NSLP and SBP. Fortified breakfast cereals contain added nutrients that were not originally present, or that are at higher levels than originally present. Fortified breakfast cereals typically contain the five enrichment nutrients, plus other vitamins and minerals that do not exist naturally in grains. A breakfast cereal is fortified if the food is labeled as “fortified” or the ingredients statement lists the vitamins and minerals added to the product. These nutrients are typically listed after “Vitamins and Minerals.”

Different cereal brands may list different fortification nutrients. Manufacturers may choose which nutrients to use for fortification. The USDA does not specify a minimum number of nutrients or a minimum percentage for the level of fortification for breakfast cereals in the Child Nutrition Programs.



Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP

Table 2. Crediting RTE breakfast cereals in the meal patterns for grades K-12

Ingredients	Whole grain is first ingredient	Fortified	WGR ¹	Creditable	
				NSLP, SBP, SSO	ASP
<i>Whole-grain wheat</i> , raisins, wheat bran, sugar, brown sugar syrup, contains 2% or less of salt, malt flavor. Vitamins and Minerals: <i>Potassium chloride, niacinamide, reduced iron, vitamin B₆ (pyridoxine hydrochloride), zinc oxide, vitamin B₂ (riboflavin), vitamin B₁ (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin B₁₂.</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Milled corn</i> , sugar, malt flavor, contains 2% or less of salt. Vitamins and Minerals: <i>Iron, vitamin C (sodium ascorbate, ascorbic acid), niacinamide, vitamin B₆ (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B₂ (riboflavin), vitamin B₁ (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin B₁₂.</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
<i>Wheat bran</i> , sugar, malt flavor, contains 2% or less of salt. Vitamins and Minerals: <i>Calcium carbonate, vitamin C (sodium ascorbate and ascorbic acid), reduced iron, niacinamide, vitamin B₆ (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B₂ (riboflavin), folic acid, vitamin B₁ (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, vitamin B₁₂, vitamin D.</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
<i>Puffed rice</i> , ferrous sulfate (a source of iron), niacinamide, citric acid, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid.	No	No	No	No	Yes
<i>Whole-grain rolled oats</i> , sugar, natural flavors, salt.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

¹ RTE breakfast cereals are WGR if the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, or the cereal is 100 whole grain.

Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP

Serving Size

The USDA's chart, [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#), summarizes the grain servings and ounce equivalents for nine groups (A-I) of creditable grain foods. Cooked breakfast cereals (regular and instant) are in group H and cold RTE breakfast cereals are in group I. The Exhibit A requirements differ depending on the school nutrition program.

- **NSLP, SBP, and SSO:** The required quantities for the grains component are in ounce equivalents. The CSDE's resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#), lists the Exhibit A grain ounce equivalents that apply to the NSLP, SBP, and SSO meal patterns for grades K-12.
- **ASP:** The required quantities for the grains component are in servings. The CSDE's resource, [Grains/Breads Servings for Grades K-12 in the ASP](#), lists the Exhibit A grain servings that apply to the ASP meal patterns for grades K-12.

Table 3 summarizes the required quantities for breakfast cereals in the meal patterns for grade K-12. The minimum creditable amount is ¼ ounce equivalent or ¼ serving.

Table 3. Required quantities for breakfast cereals for grades K-12			
Type of breakfast cereal		NSLP, SBP, and SSO	ASP
		1 ounce equivalent	1 serving
Group H	Cooked hot	½ cup cooked or 1 ounce (28 grams) dry ¹	½ cup cooked or 25 grams (0.9 ounce) dry ¹
	RTE flakes or rounds	1 cup or 1 ounce ²	¾ cup or 1 ounce ²
Group I	RTE puffed	1¼ cups or 1 ounce ²	¾ cup or 1 ounce ²
	RTE granola	¼ cup or 1 ounce ²	¾ cup or 1 ounce ²
¹ Cereal grains typically credit based on the cooked serving, but menu planners may choose to use the dry uncooked weight. ² The serving size is based on weight or volume, whichever is less. If the appropriate volume of cereal weighs less than 1 ounce (28 grams), it still credits as 1 ounce equivalent. For example, 1 cup of flaked cereal that weighs 26 grams credits as 1 ounce equivalent.			

Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP

Resources

Afterschool Snack Program (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program>

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE)

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASPHandbook.pdf>

Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/GrainCalculationSNPgradesK-12.pdf>

Calculation Methods for Grains/Breads Servings for Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/GrainCalculationASPgradesK-12.pdf>

Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/ComparisonGrainCreditingSNP.pdf>

Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditEnrichedGrainsSNP.pdf>

Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE)

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditWholeGrainsSNP.pdf>

CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 11-19: Weekly Whole Grain-rich (WGR) Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Memos/OM2019/OM11-19.pdf>

Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf>

Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/GrainsOzEqSNPgradesK-12.pdf>

Grains Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#Grains>

Grains/Breads Component for Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program/Documents#GrainsBreadsK12>

Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP

Grains/Breads Servings for Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/GrainServingsASPgradesK-12.pdf>

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Meal Patterns for the ASP (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program#MealPatternsASP>

Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/WGRRequirementSNPgradesK-12.pdf>

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Grains_Oz_Eq_Fillable_508.pdf

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs – Completed Sample (USDA):

https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Example_Grains_Oz_Eq.pdf

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/PFS.pdf>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

USDA Memo SP 24-2020, CACFP 13-2020 and SFSP 13-2020: Questions and Answers for the Child Nutrition Programs during School Year 2020-2021:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic/covid-19/questions-and-answers-child-nutrition-programs-during-sy-2020-21>

Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP



For more information, refer to the CSDE's guide, *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*, and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditCerealsSNPgradesK-12.pdf>.

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